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SUBJECT: UNAMID REPORTS 2008 DARFUR CASUALTY FIGURES, PROPOSES NEXT STEPS IN PEACE PROCESS

REF: A.) KHARTOUM 390

B.) KHARTOUM 150

¶1. (SBU) There were 1,540 total violence-related deaths in Darfur in 2008, including those related to banditry, and 640 of these deaths were the result of Arab-Arab inter-tribal violence, according to UNAMID polchief Abdul Mohammed. Mohammed told polchief on March 31 that UNAMID will soon release a public report with these figures based on its own reporting and the reporting of NGOs. These figures track with earlier reporting from Embassy Khartoum (also based on figures from UNAMID that Darfur expert Alex DeWaal posted on his blog) indicating that there were 528 total violence-related civilian deaths in Darfur in 2008 and that Darfur has, for now, reached a "miserable stasis" with periodic, small outbreaks of violence qualitatively different from the mass murder of 2003-2006. Mohammed noted that this is a significant decline from 2007 and demonstrates a dramatic overall decline in civilian violent deaths over the last four years of the Darfur conflict.

¶2. (SBU) Mohammed believes that the time may be right for additional progress in the Darfur peace process. Following the GOS' reckless decision to expel 13 INGOs, the regime will be looking for ways to demonstrate positive progress in Darfur. For example, the GOS might be willing to live up to its commitment to a ceasefire (announced by President Bashir at the Sudan People's Initiative in October 2008, but immediately qualified by a statement that it would depend on a "mechanism" to implement it.) Mohammed said that UNAMID has now (finally) prepared a ceasefire monitoring mechanism, copied from some American ideas (Ref A), that it could quickly implement if the GOS agrees to unilateral security commitments, or if Chief Mediator Bassole is able to negotiate bilateral security agreements between the GOS and any of the rebel movements. Mohammed noted that last year UNAMID's expenses totaled \$1.2 billion, and this year the cost is projected at over \$1.7 billion. He acknowledged, with apparent frustration, that the oft-criticized mission must begin to demonstrate some actual progress in bringing peace to Darfur. Mohammed said that former South African President Mbeki (in his capacity as Chairperson of the AU High-Level Panel on Darfur) would push for security commitments from the GOS during his visit to Sudan and Darfur this week.

¶3. (SBU) There remains a serious problem in coordination between Chief Mediator Bassole and UNAMID, according to Mohammed. He reported that since the Doha talks in early March (to which UNAMID was not invited despite a focus on security issues,) there has been no coordination between the JMST and UNAMID although there was a cable from DPKO instructing the JMST and UNAMID to coordinate. Mohammed suggested that donors and the UNSC members should also push the JMST and UNAMID to coordinate. He suggested a division of labor between the JMST and UNAMID. JMST should have the lead on phase-one security negotiations (but with the participation of UNAMID,) and UNAMID should have the lead on phase-two civil society negotiations

in Darfur to achieve greater buy-in from tribal leaders and IDPs (but with participation from the JMST.) Phase-three "comprehensive peace talks" should be led by the Chief Mediator and whichever country hosts the talks, but also with participation from UNAMID. Mohammed complained that Bassole works in isolation and doesn't inform anyone of his activities nor seek input or participation from anyone else, despite the fact that UNAMID would need to implement whatever is ultimately negotiated.

14. (SBU) Comment: Mohammed is just as territorial and ambitious as Bassole, but it is certainly ridiculous and shameful that the UN's own bureaucracy, ego, and turf wars appear to be additional obstacles to achieving peace in Darfur. We should press both Bassole and UNAMID to coordinate better at every possible opportunity. UNAMID's 2008 violence-related casualty figures for Darfur will no doubt be disputed by emotional activists in the advocacy community, and should be corroborated by additional organizations such as the ICRC and Human Rights Watch. One must also recognize that all the state and other actors who caused the mass murders in the Darfur tragedy's first years are still very much in place and largely unrepentant. However, there is a demonstrable downward trend in violence-related deaths that indicates the changing nature of the conflict in Darfur. As we have reported previously (Ref B), the intermittent Darfur conflict of 2008-2009 reflects a gruesome low-grade fever of a stalemate that could be broken - with the opportunity for tangible improvements on the ground - if the U.S. and the rest of the international community are pragmatic about seeking security commitments from the GOS and the rebels. A comprehensive political solution may be elusive for some time to come, but real improvements in security are within reach.

FERNANDEZ